Sinclair on Warranties and Indemnities on Share and Asset Sales

Seventh Edition

General Editor
Robert Thompson

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Preface to the Seventh Edition

The last edition of this work was published in January 2005. This seventh edition has been substantially updated to reflect changes in approach, convention and law since then.

Major changes have been made to the way tax is dealt with, to reflect the current convention of seeking to incorporate all tax matters—including the covenant and tax warranties—within the sale agreement itself, as a separate schedule. Much of the revised drafting can, however, still be applied to circumstances where the old-fashioned approach of a separate tax deed is employed.

The warranties have been substantially updated to reflect new areas of potential liability, new or updated legislation and changes to convention. The prior pensions warranties have been replaced and updated. The new set now provide a starting point for any relevant scheme that might be encountered. No set of precedent warranties will ever be sufficiently comprehensive or generic to be capable of being applied, without a degree of tailoring, to every transaction. The same is true in respect of these warranties. Where relevant, in-depth commentary has been provided, which is designed to explain the differing views that are likely to be applied to a particular risk or warranty. Effective negotiation requires an understanding of the issue and an appreciation of the likely concerns from either perspective.

Limitations that might be applied to warranties, and in some cases to the indemntities, have been collected together in a new chapter and expanded upon to reflect current convention and practice. A developing area relates to purchaser knowledge, the standard of disclosure and the satisfaction of "awareness" obligations (in relation to warranties that have been so qualified). These are reviewed in some detail, and the book reflects current thinking on these subjects.

The previous edition required some degree of cross-referencing between the relevant appendices and the chapters, particularly in relation to the warranties and indemnities on the sale of a business. This has been simplified in this edition by the incorporation of the actual warranties and indemnities within the chapter. At the time of writing, the Companies Act 2006 has only come into force in respect of some of its provisions. Where relevant, these have been noted. The remaining provisions are currently timetabled to come into force on a staged basis on or before October 2009, but it is possible that this may change again given the delays in implementation experienced so far.

The aim of the book has not changed. It remains a practitioners guide and is designed to assist both vendors' and purchasers' solicitors in the preparation and negotiation of suitable documentation that meets their respective objectives. It is also likely to be of assistance for those engaged in broking or corporate finance work, where it may provide them with the ability to "broker" a solution to an impasse that has been reached between opposing solicitors in relation to the terms of a particular warranty or indemnity.

The views expressed in this book as to the appropriateness or fairness of any of the warranties and indemnities, or the amendments to any of them are subjective, although in most cases they reflect current thinking. Aside from my own work, the book has required significant contributions from many of my partners, and their responsible fee earners around the firm. Many have been asked to provide their specialist input at short notice and in addition to their burdensome workloads. I am grateful to them all. Special mention should be made of my partner, Paul Christian, who has substantially revised the tax sections, Roger Nankervis for the property sections, Stephen Elliott for employment, Tushar Bhate for pensions, Judy Baker for IP/IT and Jim James for insolvency, as well as the numerous unnamed individuals who have assisted to various degrees throughout the course of this revision.

The law is stated as at January 1, 2008.

Robert Thompson January 2008

Introduction

The book is largely organised around precedents of clauses and documents, accompanied by commentary. In the precedents, words which begin with a capital letter are assumed to be defined terms; the definitions in either Ch.4.1 or the Tax Covenant have been adopted. The words and phrases which are included in square brackets in the precedents are, in the main, suggested amendments for the benefit of the party to whom the first draft, which would not usually include any of the bracketed additions, is presented. Where relevant and for ease of interpretation, the clauses have been highlighted in bold to differentiate the wording of these from the accompanying commentaries and explanations.

The precedents deal primarily with the sale of shares of a company but, without overloading the text with obvious variations, the amendments which are applicable to the sale of a business have generally been indicated. In the text, the company which is being sold is referred to as "the target company". The vendors of the shares are described as such throughout the book, and it is assumed that they are the persons giving the warranties. When they are not, it would be appropriate to differentiate between them in the sale and purchase agreement and in the Tax Covenant by reference to vendors and warrantors. The word "covenantors" is used in circumstances where there is reference to a separate tax deed.

To assist readers who wish to make use of, or be reminded about the precedents, these are collected together in the Appendices. In particular, Appendix 8 contains the various clauses discussed in Chs 1 to 4, whilst Appendix 4 repeats the warranties by the vendors which are examined in Chs 5 to 7. A short form version of the warranties contained in Appendix 4 can be found at Appendix 10. In addition, Appendix 11 contains a disclosure letter precedent.

The following initials are used in relation to particular statutes:

CA Companies Act

CAA Capital Allowances Act

FA Finance Act

ICTA Income and Corporation Taxes Act

IHTA Inheritance Tax Act

IT(EP)A Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act

LPA Law of Property Act

LMPA Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act

TMA Taxes Management Act

TCGA Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act

VATA Value Added Tax Act

The initials VAT refer to Value Added Tax, the initials SDLT refer to Stamp Duty Land Tax and the initials ESC refer to an Inland Revenue Extra Statutory Concession.

viii Introduction

The chapters are arranged into a logical chronology beginning with the history and function of warranties and indemnities. The book then considers the various parties to the sale and purchase agreement, and some of the nuances between them. There is then a chapter explaining the rights and liabilities that arise from a breach of warranty, and the particular issues that need to be considered in relation to this. Subsequently, there are three successive chapters containing in depth analysis of taxation warranties, property warranties and general long-form commercial warranties that are likely to be of application in a share sale. Warranties and indemnities applicable to an assets deal are then separately considered before moving on to a detailed review of disclosure letters, their purpose and effect. The next chapter then focuses on the form of Tax Covenant (in its modern format) and relevant limitations. This is followed by a chapter dedicated to limitation provisions that might be applicable to warranty and/or indemnity claims. Finally there are two further chapters dealing with completion accounts and valuation, so as to give the reader an insight into how the negotiation of warranties and indemnities may be affected by completion accounts, where a transaction includes these, and to put the warranties and indemnities in context by reference to how the target company or business was valued.

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